

# Group within historical society urges openness

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## Duxbury

DUXBURY — Nearly 70 people attended a meeting last night to learn about leadership issues that concern a group of Duxbury Rural and Historical Society members.

A group called Members for an Open Society formed in June to address concerns about what its members say has been inadequate communication by the society's leadership, particularly regarding the purchase of the Nathaniel Winsor House, which is to become the society's new headquarters.

A dispute regarding the Winsor House was partly responsible for the June firing of the society's executive director, Marcia Solberg. Society President Judith Hall said "irreconcilable differences" had developed between Solberg and the society's executive committee.

The steering committee for Members for an Open Society presented its position last night and answered questions.

"A healthy organization has no place for making unilateral decisions and withholding information," Open Society member Dick Dobbins said. "Effective leadership is asking what do members value in an organization."

Open Society members said they want the Rural and Historical Society to be a more open organization with a stronger focus on its mission to preserve the town's historical and natural resources and encourage awareness of the area's heritage and rural character.

During the first half of the meeting, discussion centered on the executive committee's decision to purchase the Winsor House, but members of the audience said they wanted to know more about Members for an Open Society.

Open Society members then re-

viewed their platform, which will be adopted by the group's slate of candidates for the society's upcoming election. According to the platform, Open Society candidates will vow to uphold the organization's bylaws, ensure that the society is financially responsible and focus on the society's mission and effective communication with members.

The society's annual meeting has been rescheduled from Jan. 21 to Feb. 9 to allow for additional membership renewals, said Corinne Woodworth, vice president of the society. Four executive officers and four members-at-large will be elected.

Open Society members said they will present their slate of candidates within two weeks, but some said they want the group to work with the society's executive nominating committee to come up with a joint slate.

"I think it's very important at this point to come up with a compromise," said Patrick Browne, the society's new executive director.

Other members said they are in favor of having multiple candidates or slates of candidates.

After the meeting, Dobbins said Open Society members would be willing to discuss the joint-slate idea, but that their priority is to back candidates who favor openness.

Some society members said they think the Open Society is causing divisiveness within the organization.

"There are a lot of things that need to be done, none of which needs to take place in an adversarial environment, which I do think this (group) creates," said James Hartford, a member of the society's executive committee.

## Duxbury Rural & Historical Society Names New Director



The Duxbury Rural and Historical Society has hired Patrick T.J. Browne as executive director. Prior to his appointment, Browne was the special programs coordinator with the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in Cambridge, where he worked with scholars from a wide range of disciplines. Browne coordinated Academy lectures, discussion groups, special exhibits and other activities. He was also responsible for public relations for the Academy as well as producing their news letter and serving as editorial assistant for their bi-annual cultural journal.

Browne's experience includes writing grant proposals to support programs and events on behalf of the Academy.

A native of Acton, Browne received a BA in English and a MA in American History at UMass/Amherst. During his graduate studies, Browne was awarded a teaching assistantship for academic merit. Working with such historians as the Civil War scholar Stephen Oates, Browne taught courses on early American history and the American Civil War. He was also an archival assistant in the Archives and Special Collections at the W.E.B. DuBois Library of UMass/Amherst, where he created and implemented a computer database for the purpose of cataloguing the several thousand photographs in their collection.

As a historian and researcher, his areas of concentration include 17th century New England, Puritanism, and particularly the social and political history of slavery and antislavery movements in the United States. His masters' thesis examined the politics of the antislavery movement in Boston through an exploration of the life of abolitionist William Cooper Nell, a protégé of William Lloyd Garrison. Browne was published in *The New England Quarterly* in September, 1997.

Browne is a member of Phi Alpha Theta, a historical honor society. His other interests include theater, architecture, photography and sketching. His wife, Kelly Hines Browne, is a fifth grade school teacher in Plymouth and is active in the theater arts program at Duxbury High School.